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ABSTRACT

A project in which high school students examine the social history of the United States through a popular music presentation is described. The introduction of the paper draws together a series of sources which emphasize the importance of popular music, particularly during the 1960's and 1970's. The social effects of popular music are outlined: creating a sense of group unity, arousing emotions, elevating morale, and encouraging people to get involved. Next, the student project is described. Student groups are involved in choosing a theme of social protest and social change in the 1960's and 1970's and creating a program based on the group's theme. The program, which will analyze various social viewpoints of the theme, may be presented in the form of a slide show, demonstration, live concert, or other. Each group also presents a discography to the class. A sample discography of anti-Vietnam recordings, a list of suggested themes, reference sources, evaluation criteria, and a student questionnaire are included. (KC)

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THE MAKING OF A ROCK FESTIVAL: A HISTORICAL CREATIVE EXPERIENCE IN A GROUP STUDY OF POPULAR MUSIC AS AN INSTRUMENT IN STUDYING AMERICAN CULTURE OF THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

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Paper and Activity delivered at the Arizona Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development/Arizona Council for the Social Studies Spring Conference, March 24-26, 1983, Mesa, Arizona.

Objective: Students, in groups of _____, will develop a _____ minute rock program that deals with a particular social theme prominent in the sixties and seventies.

Introduction:

> For the reality of what's happening today in America, we must go to rock-n-roll, to popular music. - Ralph Gleason, The American Scholar[1]

William H. Cartwright maintains that one of the major objectives for teaching history is its use as a guide to social action. He writes:

> The study of history is essential as a guide to social action. Only by studying the past can we learn the manner in which man arrived at his present social movement. And only in light of such knowledge can we hope to direct our future course. There are cynics who would charge that such assertions are vain, that all that man has learned from history is that men do not learn from history. To make this charge is to ignore all human progress since prehistoric times. If the charge were true, our species would still be where it was when biological development had arrived at the physique and intellect of modern man. It is only through the use of history, the application of knowledge acquired by those who had gone before, that man was able to civilize himself. Further improvement in the lot of humanity can be brought about only in the same manner.[2]

A way in which to study and teach American history as a social guide to understanding both the present and the future is through reflectively examining popular music. Hugo A. Keesing, in discussing popular music as a document

for understanding American culture, states, "During the past three decades popular music, especially its lyrical content, has been the object of widespread research by people who regard it as a cultural barometer and hear in it the voice of America."[3] Elsewhere, he asserts:

> Music, when viewed over time, has mirrored changes in much the same way that the popular press, films and television have. Its advantage over the others is that it has responded more quickly, at a lower cost, and has probably reached more of the young people who are likely to be in the forefront of change. By exploring fads, teenage concerns, social issues and every other imaginable topic, PM /popular music/ fills in much of the background that traditional historians ignore. Pop songs can serve as a catalyst to understanding the evolution of our culture. There is a fasinating history in those grooves.[4]

In 1934, Sigmund Spaeth makes a remarkable statement which can still be echoed today in regards to the study of popular music:

> The popular song has become a most revealing index to American life in general. It sums up the ethics, the habits, the slang, the intimate character of every generation, and it will tell as much to future students of current civilization as any histories, biographies, or newspapers of the time.[5]

In light of the above comments by Keesing and Spaeth, one ought to consider the words of Paul Krassner while discussing the importance of popular music during the kaleidoscope of events in the late 1960's:

> And the music is what holds it all together.

> The music is an integral part of the revolution.
>
> The music is the very rhythm of life.
>
> The music is the soul of the universe.
>
> The music is the beat of the evolutionary process.
>
> The music is the missing link between a pulsating amoeba and a dancing hippie.
>
> The music is the sound of freedom.[6]

From the simple structure of folk music to the associative surrealism of electric music, pop music not only presents a "window of American culture," but is also seen both as a means of communication for, to, and among youth and as a means and vehicle for propaganda. Popular music "telegraphs important messages to young people and helps to define and codify the mores and standards of their own subculture," provides "the search for personal experience, primarily of the 'mind-expanding' sort," and "puts youth in touch with serious, intellectual critiques of American life."[7]

The function of popular music as propaganda is "to communicate a specific 'sense of reality' or view of the world."[8] Such songs help "to recruit supporters, to arouse sympathy, to counteract the feelings of despair, to encourage or inspire with hope for a new and happier future."[9] For example, Robert Sherman observed the impact of music on the civil rights movement. He reports:

> They are dramatic emblems of the struggle and mighty weapons in it. Their steady, surging rhythms, their lilting melodies, and thier simple, inspirational words, repeated over and over again, generate a fervor that can only be described as religious in its intensity. Even the least articulate of people can join in these group songs and respond to them fully; often the music serves as the best, even the primary, means of communication between the people and their leaders.[10]

Popular music used as a persuasive technique can be perceived as functioning to achieve the following effects:

A. Producing a strong sense of cohesion and group unity.

B. Arousing emotions so that listeners are more sensitive to a speaker's message.

C. Elevating moral among listeners.

D. Attracting non-participators to a cause.

E. Encouraging people to get involved.

F. Getting listeners to identify with a call to action (a concrete solution is not stated, but rather the song calls the audience to become involved in some way).

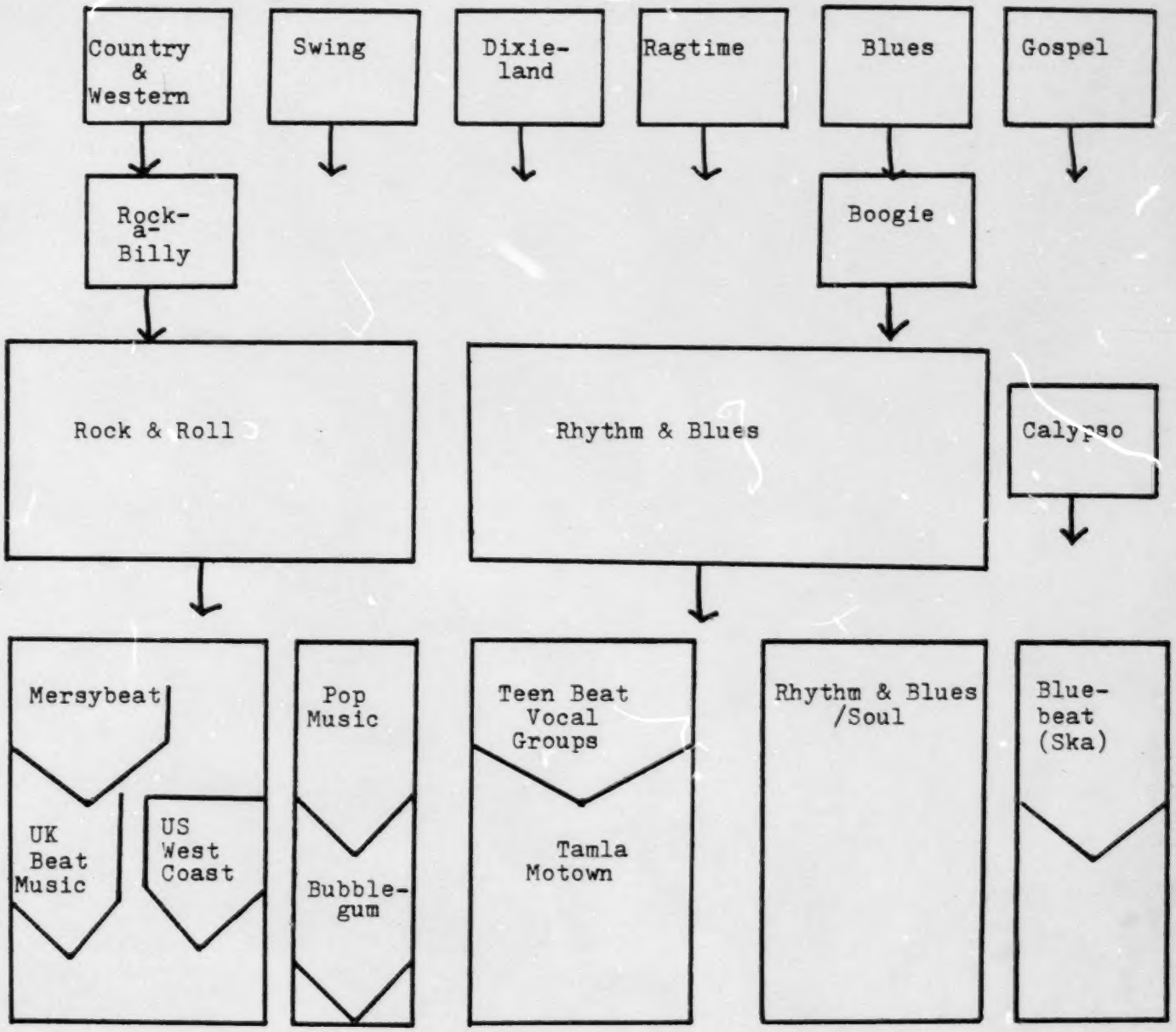
G. Leading to counter-attitudinal advocacy on the part of listeners:

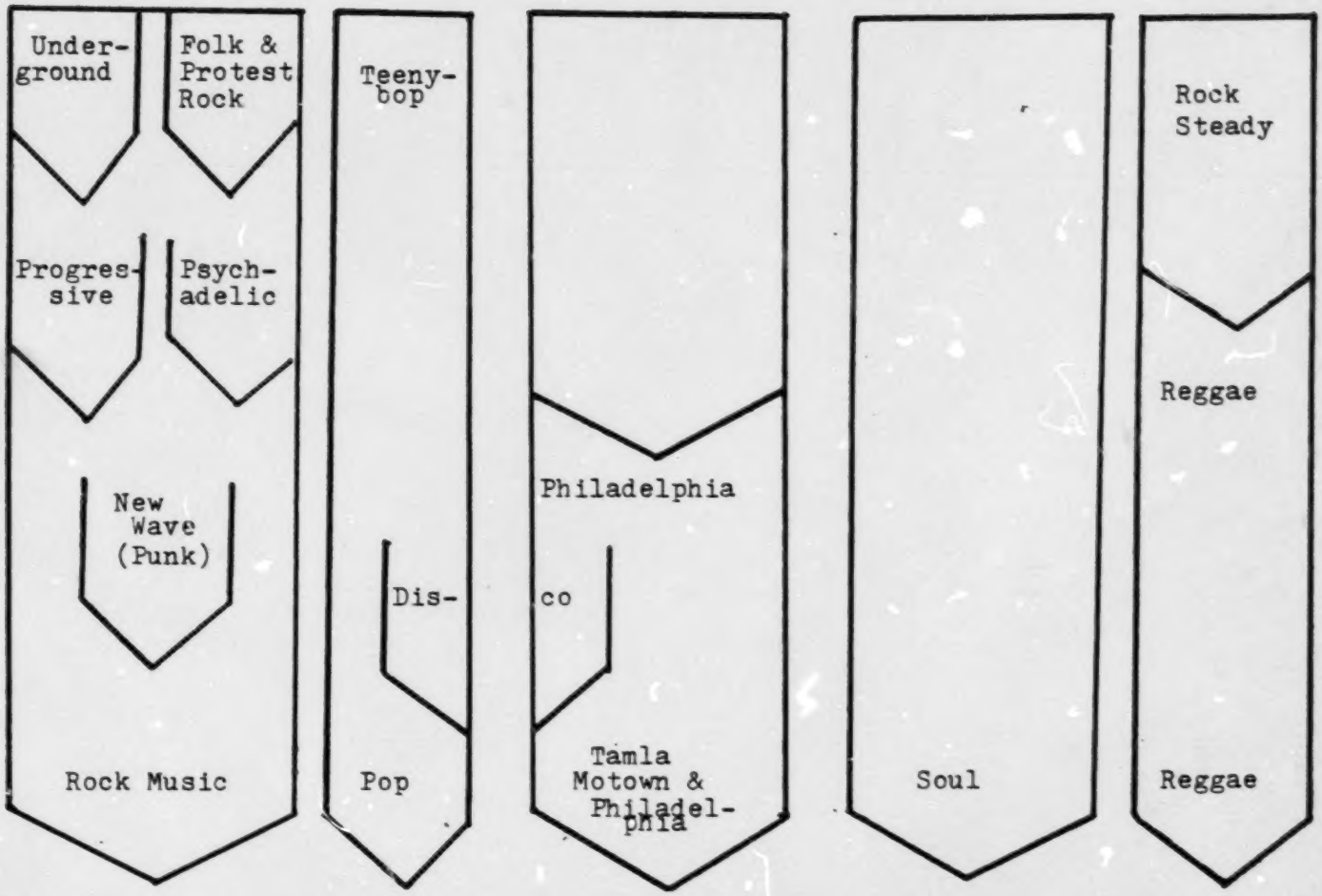
--by actively participating and singing the song, the leader gets the audience to say what he/she wants them to say, whether or not the audience fully believes the message, thus leading to more attitude change.

--by having a lasting effect, an attitude may be

strengthened much later by a re-hearing of the song.[11]

History Of Popular Music: The following chart provides a synoptic, visual view of the history of popular music:[12]





Assignment: Students in groups of _____ will pick one theme that deals with social protest and social change in the sixties and seventies. Students will design and develop a _____ minute program based on the music of the group's chosen theme. The program ought to analyze the various social viewpoints of the theme as it took place during the decades of the sixties and seventies. The group needs to examine the musical creation of the societal make-up of the theme and to determine what are the characteristics and outlooks that are revealed in the music. The type

of program and presentation (slide show, sing-along, demonstration, live concert, etc.) is open-ended and is designed according to the desires of the individual groups. At the time of presentation, each group is to give a list of songs (a discography) of their chosen theme to each student in class. For example:

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY OF ANTI-VIETNAM RECORDINGS, 1962-1974

1. The Guess Who - American Woman
2. Simon and Garfunkel - Silent Night/7 o'clock News
3. Country Joe McDonald and The Fish - I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag
4. Eric Burdon and The Animals - Sky Pilot
5. The Doors - Unknown Soldier
6. Tom Paxton - Talking Vietnam Pot Luck Blues
7. The Kingston Trio - Where Have All The Flowers Gone
8. The Four Preps - Big Draft
9. Phil Ochs - Draft Dodger Rag
10. The Bob Seger System - 2 + 2 = ?
11. Creedance Clearwater Revival - Fortunate Son
12. John Lennon and The Plactic Ono Band - Give Peace A Chance
13. Edwin Starr - War
14. The Youngbloods - Get Together
15. Thunderclap Newman - Something In The Air
16. The Buffalo Springfield - For What It's Worth
17. Peter, Paul, and Mary - Eugene McCarthy (If You Love Your Country)

18. Graham Nash - Chicago
19. The Jefferson Airplane - Volunteers
20. Melanie - Candles In The Rain
21. Marvin Gaye - What's Going On
22. The Beach Boys - Student Demonstration Time
23. Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young - Ohio
24. The Who - Won't Get Fooled Again
25. Cat Stevens - Peace Train

Themes: Each group can choose one of the following themes or decide on one that might interest the members of the group. Some possible themes are:[13]

America	Big Business	Police and Prisons
Death	Politics	Urban Life
Brother/Sisterhood	Ecology	Life
Poverty	Protest	War and Peace
Violence	Freedom	Women
Hunger	Racism	Love
Injustice	Old Age	Adolescence
Self Image	Sucide	Religion
Indians	Loneliness	Rat Race
Historical Images	Education	Family

Upon choosing the theme, each group should begin to collect the music that represents the various ideas revolved around the theme. Two books can be of great help in trying to find the music that is suitable for the group's theme. These books are: B. Lee Cooper's Images Of American Society

In Popular Music: A Guide To Reflective Teaching, [14] and Bob Macken, Peter Fornatale, and Bill Ayres' The Rock Music Source Book.[15] Of course, each group can feel free to choose and select other songs that may not be listed in either of these books that the group believes reflects the ideas of the theme.

Evaluation: This assignment is worth _____ points. It is based on:

A. The orignality of the program.
B. The ability to get the theme across to the class.
C. The historicity of the program.
D. The length of clock-time of the program.
E. The individual and group effort of students involved.
F. The completion of the questionaire by each member of the group.

Questionaire - At the conclusion of the group's program, each individual member will turn in a questionaire based on the group's presentation. Each of the following questions are to be answered in an intellectual and responsible manner:[16]

1. Cite five significant facts learned from this activity.
2. What three conclusions can be developed concerning the social issues contained in your group's theme music?
3. What in this activity would lead you to accept those conclusions?
4. Why might your conclusions be wrong?

5. How might these conclusions be applied to other topics studied?
6. How applicable are your conclusions to other times and places?
7. How do these conclusions relate to you? to us?
8. What values were expressed in this activity?
9. Do you accept or reject these values? Why?
10. How might these conclusions and values help you to improve the lot of humanity?

I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Hugo A. Keesing, University of Maryland, and Dr. B. Lee Cooper, Newberry College, for their time and consideration in helping me with the sources for this activity.

Sources

1. As quoted in David Pichaske's A Generation In Motion: Popular Music And Culture In The Sixties. New York: Schirmer Books, 1979, p. xix.

2. William H. Cartwright, "The Role Of History Teaching In Citizenship Education." The High School Journal, vol. 44 (December, 1960), p. 116.

3. Hugo A. Keesing, "Pop Goes To War: The Music Of World War II and Vietnam." Paper delivered at the Ninth National Convention of the Popular Culture Association, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvannia, April 26-28, 1979, p. 1.

4. Hugo A. Keesing, "Culture In The Grooves: American History At 78, 45 & 33 1/3 RPM." Paper delivered at the Eight National Convention of the Popular Culture Association, Cincinnati, Ohio, April 19-22, 1978, pp. 7-8.

5. Sigmund Spaeth, The Facts Of Life In Popular Song. New York: Whittlesey House, 1934, pp. i-ii.

6. As quoted on the back of an album cover by United Artists Records, entitled Original Motion Picture Score: Revolution.

7. Robert A. Rosenstone, "'The Times They Are A-changin'': The Music Of Protest." The Annals Of The American Academy Of Political And Social Science, vol. 382 (March, 1969), p. 143.

8. R. Serge Desisoff, Sing A Song Of Social Significance. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972, p. 3.

9. As quoted in R. Serge Denisoff's Sing A Song Of Social Significance, p. 3.

10. Robert Sherman, "Sing A Song Of Freedom." Saturday Review, vol. 66 (September 28, 1963), pp. 65, 67.

11. This following list is not of my origin. I found this list laying on the ground. I have attempted to find it's author. R. Serge Denisoff makes similar statements in his book, Sing A Song Of Social Significance, pp. 2-3 and Joseph Bruchac makes some of the similar statements in his book, Poetry Of Pop, Paradise, California: Dustbooks, 1973, p. 17.

12. Adapted from a chart designed by Paul Clark, "Rock." London: Tull Graphic Ltd., 1976. For a good history of rock & roll read Jim Miller, ed., History of Rock & Roll. New York: Random House/Rolling Stone Press, 1980.

13. Themes from B. Lee Cooper, Images Of American Society In Popular Music: A Guide To Reflective Teaching. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982. And from Bob Macken, Peter Fornatale, and Bill Ayres, The Rock Music Source Book. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1980.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Questionaire adapted from Francis McMann and Carolyn Jepsen McMann, "How To Check On The Effectiveness Of Your Activities." Social Education, vol.44 (November/December, 1980), p. 625.